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the generals, but he was also a native of Sparta, whose supremacy and name were at that moment all-powerful. Kleonor had been before, not indeed a general, but a lochage, or one in the second rank of officers. He was an elderly man, and he was an Arcadian, while more than the numerical half of the army consisted of Arcadians and Achaeans. Either of these two, therefore, and various others besides, enjoyed a sort of prerogative or established starting-point for taking the initiative in reference to the dispirited army. But Xenophon was comparatively a young man — I should say, a very young man — “with little military experience. He was not an officer at all. He had nothing to start with except his personal qualities and previous training.” “In him are exemplified those peculiarities of Athens — spontaneous and forward impulse as well in conception as in execution, confidence under circumstances which made others despair, persuasive discourse and publicity of discussion made subservient to practical business, so as at once to appeal to the intelligence, and stimulate the active zeal, of the multitude.” “The Athenian Xenophon was among the few who could think, speak, and act with equal efficiency.” “It was this tripartite accomplishment, the exclusive possession of which, in spite of constant jealousy on the part of the Boeotian officers and comrades of Proxenus, elevated Xenophon into the most ascendent position in the Cyreian army.”

VIII. — *Φύσει or Θέσει — Natural or Conventional?*

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THE Greeks, it is well known, disputed of old with one another whether the names of things existed *φύσει*, ‘by nature,’ or *θέσει*, ‘by attribution’ — that is, as we should say, ‘by convention.’ Into the history of this dispute, into the question as to what philosophers took ground on the one side and on the other, with what arguments they supported their views, and how near they came to a final agreement, there

is no need that we enter. Their basis of argument was so much more restricted than ours that their discussions would have for us only a historical interest; and the inquiry itself is still a living one. Notwithstanding all the progress that linguistic science has made in this century, general opinion — nay, even the opinion of linguistic scholars, of writers upon language — is still so far at variance that both answers are given. This may be, at least in part, not so much from a real essential difference of view, as from a different understanding of the meaning of the terms used. But, whichever it be, the discordance is not to the credit of the new science of language: if that science has not been able yet to settle so fundamental a question, between views as different as white and black, it cannot claim to have accomplished much; it is still in its infancy.

It may be sufficient to quote, as the starting-point of our own inquiry, the expressed opinion of one well-known and highly meritorious author, Archbishop Trench, of Dublin. In his "Study of Words" (p. 173, note), he remarks, after noting the fact of the dispute, whether words were *θέσει* or *φύσει*, "it is needless to say that the last is the truth"; and one seems to see on his face the smile of conscious superiority to those poor Greeks, who labored so long over a matter which could be settled in half a sentence, by a mere unargumentative "it is needless to say," without statement of reasons or explanation of meaning. And the Archbishop is supported, solidly and heartily, by that immense majority of the human race who know each his own language alone, and who are persuaded that only those that speak it really speak at all. Every linguistic scholar is aware how wide-spread and deep-rooted this feeling has been and still is; how it has been the foundation of many a race-name, assumed by the race to itself as self-asserted 'speakers,' all outsiders being "barbarians" or 'babblers.' And it would be very easy to find even in our enlightened communities men who, though they may know that other people have other names for things than their own, yet believe, outspokenly or in their secret hearts, that those are mere nicknames, only their own being the real thing.

Doubtless we should do wrong to assume that Trench and his fellows hold names in this sense to exist *φύσει*: that is to say, that for every conception there exists a single "natural" name, all the others being "unnatural," or "artificial," or whatever else they may choose to set up as opposed to "natural."

For, as every well-informed person is aware nowadays, there are for our current conceptions as many different names, names somewhat unlike or totally diverse, as there are languages in the world — let us say, a thousand; and, apparently, each one of the thousand has as good a right to claim that it exists *φύσει* as any of the other nine hundred ninety and nine. Can any good reason be discovered why the term applies to one more than to another? or why it belongs alike to all?

Each of the thousand plainly has its own supporting community, its constituency. Perhaps, then, each corresponds to the peculiar nature of its community, comes *φύσει* to every individual member thereof. There are, in plenty, differences of race-endowment, differences of common circumstance and education, of community atmosphere; with some of these the differences of expression may be correlated. May be so, certainly; but are they so? As regards race, it is indeed true to a very considerable extent that men of the same race employ more or less kindred expressions for a good part of their common conceptions. But then, there are ways enough of accounting for this without involving the answer *φύσει*; and there are also exceptions enough to make us cast out this answer as impossible. Take, for example, the full-blooded Celt of Ireland who uses only English names for things, the one of Wales who uses only Celtic, the one of France (there must probably be such, if there were only a test by which we could discover him.) who uses only Romanic. Take the Jew of pure lineage, talking just as the community talks with whom his lot happens to be cast. Note what names the African uses, in the various lands of his former or present servitude, while bearing in his aspect the most convincing marks of undiluted descent. Or come into an

American community, and pick out, by a little careful examination or genealogic inquiry, the representatives of a dozen diverse nationalities, and find them all calling the same things by the same names, knowing no other. This does not look very much as if names came by any kind of φύσις that is characteristic of a race. As for one that should be characteristic of a grade of ability, a cast of personal disposition and character, a tone of education and enlightenment, that is still more out of the question; every one knows that in any single community of accordant speakers such discordances, in all possible kind and degree, are abundantly found.

But if, weary of this superficial and empirical inquiry, we look more deeply to see how such a state of things comes about, we shall find a not less total absence of φύσις. We shall see that every normally constituted human being that comes into the world has a linguistic faculty amounting simply to this: that he is able to learn to speak, by acquiring those particular signs for ideas, and those methods of their use, which are established and current in the community into whose midst he is born. The whole consideration of the process by which the individual gets his "native language" teaches us this; and there is no other way of accounting for the fact that each person grows up to speak the tongue of his own community, and of his own special class of the community, without any regard to the race from which he comes, or to the capacity and disposition with which he is endowed, or to the grade of culture which he attains. If there be — we will leave that possibility open for the present, to take it up again later — a mode of expression that is natural to the individual as such, that forms a part of his φύσις, it is at any rate overborne and stifled by that other unnatural mode which his teachers impose upon him. It is difficult to see how, without laying himself open to the charge of an absurd disregard of patent facts, any one can put forth a different doctrine; can maintain, for example, that the child creates his speech by independent action, but creates it in necessary accordance with the speech of those about him. As well maintain that he creates certain melodies, devises certain trades, develops

certain branches of knowledge, dances certain combinations of steps, without learning them, but by a spontaneous mental action, which some mysterious, undefined and indefinable, force brings into wonderful accordance with the like action of his fellows.

It may be asserted, I believe, without any chance of successful contradiction, that not a single item of the traditional English speech received by us from our forefathers has a vestige of right to claim to exist *φύσει* in any one of the innumerable individuals that employ it, to have been produced by him under government of an internal, instinctive impulse, that made it what it is and no other. The tie existing between the conception and the sign is one of mental association only, a mental association as artificial as connects, for example, the sign 5 with the number it stands for, or π with 3.14159+.

That a system of signs won after the openest and most conscious fashion in this way is capable of answering to us the purposes of a language may be clearly shown in the acquisition of a foreign tongue. One may take a grammar and a dictionary, and commence, by the tedious method of translating into his own set of familiar signs that set which the French or the German child learns by a directer process, and may keep so long at it that a French or German page is as readily and surely intelligible to him as an English one; moreover, by going among the people who use that other set, and practicing himself in the use of them, he may "get them loose," as the Germans say, may mobilize them, associate them in such fashion with his conceptions that they will come into his mind, at first not less readily than his old English signs, and then even more so; and when this last takes place, he has deposed his first acquisition in favor of a second. If the process of substitution be not begun too late, after the habits of thought and habits of utterance have become too far fixed to be altered, it may go on even to the oblivion of one's "native speech," and to the winning of a command of the "foreign tongue" not inferior to that of any person to whom the latter is "native." In fact, *native tongue* means simply 'tongue first acquired': acquired under peculiar

circumstances, and therefore in its own peculiar way; and having upon the mental powers, in respect to training and development, an effect which no second acquisition can have, in anything like the same degree.

There are, it is true, differences between the conceptions attached in different languages to words that seem synonymous. But these have nothing to do with determining the peculiar form of the varying signs. So there are marked differences between the conceptions of individual speakers of the same language. Every child begins with using a host of signs of which he is far enough from apprehending the meaning in fullness and with accuracy; and this imperfection of apprehension cleaves to him, in greater or less degree in different parts of his vocabulary, to the end. However much an idea may expand and grow clearer in his mind, or in that of the whole community, there is no corresponding change of the sign.

But there are not a few pictorial, imitative, onomatopoeic signs in our speech: is not the case otherwise with them? do not they, at least, have in them something of a *φύσει* character? Yes, in a certain sense; but not at all as the term *φύσει* is meant in the controversy which we are judging. So, among the mathematical signs we use, a round mark, reminding one of a hole, may be said to be more suggestive of vacancy or nothingness, and a single straight mark of unity, than the other figures are suggestive, each of its own meaning; they have in them an element of what we may call onomatopoeic force. But there is no necessity about this; nothing that makes the signs in question, to the exclusion of others, the "natural" representatives of their meaning. If there were, no other sign for 'naught' would be acceptable; and we should have to signify 'two' by two strokes, and 'three' by three strokes — as, in fact, the Romans and Chinese have done — and so on. Just so, when it is pointed out, we see that there is a kind of adaptedness in two parallel lines ($=$) to signify equality, especially when compared with $>$ and $<$, as used to signify superiority and inferiority; yet, in the great majority of cases, the signs used (like $+$ and $-$) are purely conventional, and answer their purpose precisely as well; and

these particular purposes would be answered just as well by other signs, if once established in use for them. There is no such thing as a “natural” symbol for nonentity, or unity, or plurality; it is only that, in casting about for signs for this whole class of conceptions, we find certain ones for certain uses more readily suggested than others, which would have served equally well: the effective use is not dependent on any such considerations. That a certain bird is called a *cuckoo*, by a rude imitation of its note (for the bird really utters neither proper *k* sound nor *oo* sound, and its distinct interval of musical tone is lost in our reproduction), is an obvious and generally intelligible onomatopœia; but if the word *cuckoo* were φύσει the name of the animal, then the other animals that make imitable sounds would have also to get their names from them. And there is certainly no φύσις in calling, for example, the related American species by the same name, since they do not utter the same note. So the *crack* and *crash*, the *hiss* and *whiz* and *buzz*, and all their kin, have a like pictorial character, of a like value: it is by no means essential to their usefulness as signs, but is rather ornamental, giving them an added attraction. Such words testify to a disposition which is an interesting and a highly important one in language-making, and has to be taken carefully into account especially by those who are discussing the problem of the origin of language — the disposition, namely, to form and use signs that have about them an immediate suggestiveness, inside those rather narrow limits, imposed by the nature of the thing signified and the instrumentality employed for signifying it, within which it is practicable so to do. These imitative signs are by no means all primitive; the disposition toward their use also leads to their production from time to time, or, in the history of manifold change in the form of words, acts as a shaping force. It is essentially the same with the disposition which expresses itself in such lines as those celebrated ones of Pope: —

When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw,
The line too labors, and the words move slow.
Not so when swift Camilla scours the plain,
Flies o'er the unbending corn and skims along the main. etc.

Its office is not unlike that belonging to tone and gesture in our ordinary speech — impressive, decorative, artistic, but not indispensable in order to mutual intelligence, which is the great object of speech, and is fully attained by the use of signs respecting which we only know that others have formed with them the same associations as ourselves, and will, when we use them, think what we are thinking and desiring them to think. There is not one of these onomatopoeically signified conceptions which is not in other languages, or even also in our own, intimated by signs possessing no trace of an imitative character.

In full view, therefore, of the not wholly insignificant list of onomatopœic words existing in English, we may still maintain that the English names of things do not exist *φύσει*, that they are the results of a *θέσις*, of a *θέσις* which each one of us is led to make under government of the example or the direct instruction of others.

There is, however, another department of expression in which we might plausibly look for the clearest signs of a *φύσις*: namely, among the interjections, which should be, not the medium of signification of conceptions and judgments, but direct intimations of will and outbursts of emotion; and which thus lie upon the border between human speech and animal expression. Yet even here the effects of educated habit show themselves in the most perplexing manner. Speech is so essentially conventional that its character infects even our exclamations: which, after all, are not so much means of relieving feeling as of signifying to others that we have such and such feeling. The Englishman, accordingly, does not say *ach* and *weh* and *so*, like the German, nor *fi* and *bah*, like the Frenchman. So far as consonants and vowels are concerned, we have no available evidence that the untrained, the purely natural, human animal would give vent to any definite system of utterances in order to express any definable variety of emotions. As regards, indeed, the tone of utterance, the case is very different. The capacity of tone to serve as the immediate expression of feeling, intelligible to all human beings without explanation and without training, is beyond

dispute. This is even added as a powerful auxiliary, along with the other natural means of expression, to our conventional speech. Language without it loses half its power to move and sway, to incite and persuade. Here we seem to touch the true sphere of instinctive expressiveness. And this kind of utterance shades off into those universal acts of expression which belong to man purely as an animal, the laugh and the cry, the groan and the sob, involuntary movements of the muscles, which are analogous with the shiver, the rise of the hair and falling of the jaw, the smile, the watering or beaming of the eye, and all the other physical movements which make the countenance, the arms, the whole body, indicative of a felt emotion.

So far, then, as our present audible speech is concerned, we are able to find in it nothing but the added tone, the modulation of the voice, which can be said to have its existence and its value *φύσει*, by its own intrinsic nature. But the question still remains whether this must be regarded as the only possible sphere of natural expression. May there not be, after all, a connection between some part of the muscular apparatus and the intellectual action of the soul or inner self, whereby an idea, a conception, a judgment, has also its corresponding external and sensible action? If these meddling teachers, with their elaborated systems of conventional signs, would only keep out of the way, might not each human being, as fast as it formed ideas, produce a natural language for their expression?

In investigating this question, we are cut off from the aid of direct experiment. Every child does actually grow up in the company of trained and practiced speakers; it hears them speaking together; and, long before it can govern its own organs of utterance so as to reproduce the signs they make, it understands what many of these mean; it crows and prattles in imitation of them. To get at even a little community of two or three persons untaught to speak seems an impossibility; for humanity forbids us to bring up human beings in utter ignorance, like mere animals, merely to satisfy our curiosity; to deny them the fundamental human privilege

of instruction in speech, in order that we may see how they would act. And accident neither has created nor is likely to create, the necessary conditions of the experiment. The nearest approach to it is made in the case of individuals who by exceptional causes are cut off from the ordinary education of their kind. This may be by isolation, or it may be by deafness. Cases of the former kind, of wild and solitary men, are exceedingly rare, and the accounts given of them are of doubtful authenticity or competency. But the deaf are abundantly found and easily observed; and the ordinary name of *deaf-mute*, by which we know them, shows what is their condition in reference to speech. One of this class ordinarily differs from a normal human being only by the disabling of a single nerve, that which is sensitive to the vibrations of the tympanum, and reports them to the brain as sound, or else in the more external organs that produce the vibration. The apparatus of mental action is perfect, the apparatus of articulate utterance is also perfect; nothing is amiss with the mechanism which connects the two and coördinates their movements. Here, then, is quite what the *φύσει* theorist wants; a human being cut off from the disturbing influences of linguistic education, but accessible to light of every other kind, so far as it is not dependent on that education. He is placed in the midst of human society, which the great apostle of the *φύσει* theory, Steinthal, declares* to be the only condition indispensable to the development of speech. If, now, the deaf person produces articulate utterances as distinct permanent signs of his conceptions, if deaf persons of the same race or community produce utterances accordant with one another, such as are those of the ordinarily educated individuals in a community, if deaf persons of different race or community produce utterances that vary by differences resembling those found to prevail among existing dialects and languages, then the *φύσει* theory has a basis of observed fact to rest on; if otherwise, it has none. And that the case is otherwise does not need to be pointed out. Even the man isolated by solitude gets by degrees, in the conflict between his higher than

* *Abriss der Sprachwissenschaft*, i. 83, 84.

merely animal powers and the circumstances of his life, a certain amount of education by experience: he learns to know and classify the objects of his daily observation, to appreciate rudely the operations of the more obvious natural causes, to connect and separate and anticipate, in a manner which, if far short of what is easily within our reach, is at least beyond what any other animal can compass: he ought, then, if language is an instinctive human product, to have something of a language for his entertainment and his aid. It is certainly more important to him than to others, since he is debarred most of the means of improvement which are open to them. Yet, as we have seen, even Steinthal does not venture to claim that he will talk, but rather postulates society as the only medium in which the heaven-implanted germs of speech can develop themselves. I do not question that he is right as to the fact; but his admission appears to me a virtual abandonment of the *φύσει* theory.

As the anomalies of linguistic life thus seem to furnish no evidence of a power of immediate natural expression, we have next to examine the regular progress of the history of language, and see if this exhibits any traces of such a power. If there were a natural adaptedness of certain signs to certain ideas, we ought to be able to discover its influence among the variety of those which govern the development of speech. But, in the first place, it seems to make decidedly against the existence of the influence that there is such utter discordance among the names given by different communities to the same conception. Within the sphere of emotional expression, as pointed out above, the elements are of kindred character in all beings, and universally intelligible. The laugh, the scream of pain, the tone of anger or of grief, need no interpreter. But it is far otherwise with the signs of ideas. Languages, words, are absolutely unintelligible to him who has not learned to speak them. It is all in vain to appeal to the inner sense of meaning to help the explanation, for instance, of a Lycian or an Etruscan inscription; he who should attempt it would be simply laughed at. In the changes of form and changes of sense which constitute the main growth of speech,

we equally fail to find any regulating principle of the kind here referred to. Let us take as an example our word *φύσις* itself. It contains as its central element the root *φν* (*phü*, a *p* with an audible *h*, a puff or flatus, following it), altered, it is believed, from a yet earlier *bhû*, and having the sense of 'grow.' That there is in any human organization a state of things conditioning *bhû* or *φν* as the natural expression of the conception of 'growing,' no one probably, will be bold enough to maintain. Far from this, we do not even know whether that sense was absolutely the earliest one belonging to the word, whether it was not obtained by a transfer, even a distant one, from some other sense. Were it not for Greek usage, the root would seem rather to signify simple existence (Skt. *bhû*, Lat. *fu-i*, our *be*); and all the acuteness of the *φύσει* theorists would have been incompetent to demonstrate the transfer. The ending *σι* which makes the derived word is altered from an earlier *τι*; the same element is found, still otherwise altered, in our *growth*. Here, again, if there had been any natural adaptedness in the syllable *ti* to express, in combination with a root, the particular modification which this actually expresses, it ought to have exerted a conservative influence, keeping the element unchanged in form, or allowing it to alter only in a certain way, in accordance with the change of the idea. But no such thing is true here; nor anywhere else in language. The word *bhûti* has become *φύσις* without any reference to meaning; the transformations of its *bh* and *u* and *t* are due to phonetic influences which wrought equally through the whole language, regardless of the sense of a single element affected by them. Comparative philologists have not seldom claimed that the onomatopoeic character of a word has protected it from phonetic change; but no one has ever detected a similar protective influence as exercised by the sense of the word. Nor can we discover any conservation in the opposite direction — any, namely, that has prevented a transfer of meaning, as being inconsistent with the unchanged audible form. Of the absence of such an influence we may find evidence enough in the history of this same word *φύσις* and its relatives. *Φύσις*, we have seen,

means most literally the 'action of growing'; and how far this lies from its other uses, so much more wide and indefinite as they are, needs not to be pointed out. The addition of a simple adjective ending makes the derivative *φυσικός*; and while *physics* and *physical* and *physicist* show only a development of meaning akin with that which has taken place in *φύσις* itself, *physic* and *physician* and *metaphysics* exhibit curious movements in quite other directions. We have noted above the change, in Sanskrit and Latin and Germanic, of the signification of the root from 'grow' to 'be.' And *bhâti*, the close analogue of *φύσις* in Sanskrit, has taken the prevailing sense of 'prosperity,' instead of 'nature.' *Nature* itself, our equivalent for *φύσις*, is a word of Latin origin. It likewise has a root at its centre; and the oldest form of this is *ga* or *gan*, 'be born.' Relics of the *g* which was once the main stay and support of the meaning are to be seen in *cognate*, *agnate*, and their like. All, then, that is left in *nature* of the significant syllable which lay at the foundation of its history is the initial *n*, which many etymologists, not without a certain reason, look upon as a secondary addition, forming *gan* from a more original *ga*; the rest is a mere accumulation of formative elements, suffixes. And though there may be a degree of analogy between the conceptions 'be born' and 'grow,' it is by no means such as should by any necessity lead to the development out of both of a name for 'nature.' The Latin derivatives which have most analogy in point of formation with *φύσις* are *natio* from the altered root, and *gens* (*genti*) from its more primitive form; and how unlike they are in meaning to *φύσις*, and even to one another, is plain enough; while from *gens* we get in our language, secondarily, such curious varieties as *gentle*, *genteel*, and *gentile*, in defiance of all laws of the connection of sound and sense.

And so, if we were to extend our search, we should find it to be, through the whole domain of language: the utmost conceivable variety of expression of the same idea in different tongues; a great diversity of derivation of the expressions for any given idea; a bewildering multifariousness of meaning in families of related words: nowhere in the known history of

language-development any trace of a domination of sound by sense, or of sense by sound. Not by any means that there are not reasons, and in a host of cases discoverable reasons, why things are called as they are; but they are reasons founded, not in natural connection, but in previously formed associations, in already established conventions. When we nowadays want to signify a new conception, we have recourse to the (as above shown) purely conventionally used material lying within our reach, in our own tongue or elsewhere. We make a transfer of meaning, without other change, in a word already in use, as in *gravity*; or a derivative, as *galvanism*; or a compound, as *lightning-rod*; or we go deliberately to the anciently used stores of expression of some extinct tongue, and piece together a new vocable, as *thermometer*; or we variously combine two or more of these methods. There is always involved in the act some change of form, or of meaning, or of both; but the single underlying principle is that the new designation is obtained where, according to the existing habits of the language, it can most conveniently be found. No one ever sits down to let the idea strike in upon his soul and evoke an answering utterance: the very suggestion of such a thing is ludicrous; nor does the utterance ever slip out instinctively, without premeditation. It is all a process of the development and multiplication of usages. People having been in the habit of doing so and so, they are led, when occasion arises, to do this and that also: the new habit being connected with the old by some tie of association, it matters little what. To follow the history of this development is a task of the highest interest; in it are bound up the most valuable results of the science of language; by its aid we trace the evolution of knowledge, of thought, of institutions. But it does not bring us to—nor even, in my opinion, toward—a condition of things where we recognize the existence of any natural tie between the conception and its expression, between the idea and the word. On the contrary, we are led thereby to see the more clearly the essential congruence, in the midst of their more adventitious characteristics and their circumstances, of all the various processes of language-getting

and language-making. He, in the first place, who acquires a "foreign language" finds, by the ear or by the eye, certain combinations of sounds, which he is able more or less accurately to reproduce, and which he learns to associate with their several ideas, and to use in combination with one another, familiarly and freely, and also "correctly": that is, according to the methods usual in a given community, methods which might just as well be otherwise, if the common consent only willed it so. Again, the child learning to speak does only the same thing: he too hears and imitates certain combinations of sounds, associates them with rudimentary conceptions which he is led to form, and puts them together, at first imperfectly and awkwardly, into the phrases which the usage of his community accepts. And, in the third place, through the whole traceable development of language, the language-makers have not been giving vent to natural and directly intelligible utterances; they have, rather, been increasing, by methods of whose nature and results they were themselves only dimly conscious, their store of conventional signs, elaborating new combinations of sounds which should henceforth be associated with certain ideas, and used as their representatives. It makes, properly speaking, no difference to the users whence their sign is obtained; only, as this is intended for the general use of a community, and as it must pass the ordeal of their acceptance before it can become a part of language, it is gained in such a way as involves the least practicable change of existing habits, the least possible shock to prevailing preferences—or prejudices, if we choose to call them so. We express this prosaic fact in imaginative form by saying that it must not be "opposed to the genius of the language." This does not, however, prevent the tie of association whereby the new sign is connected with the old from being often a very slender, a remote, even a fantastic or senseless one. Such cases, to be sure, are the exceptions, and to be explained by the special circumstances of each, if we can only command knowledge of them; but they have a high theoretic importance, as showing what the practical end of word-making is, and how it justifies even the most questionable

means. On the whole, the body of expression grows and changes by an almost insensible process, step following step, each new sign attaching itself quite closely to an old one.

It is only by taking this view of the history of speech that we can explain its leading facts, and especially that capital fact, the oblivion of etymologies. In any given language, it is but a part of its words, often only a very small part, which even the skilled etymologist can carry back through even a few steps of their history, toward their ultimate roots. And as for the generality of speakers, they are ignorant and heedless of all etymological connections; to them, the word means the thing, and that is the end of it. For a time, and in a measure, the relation between primitive and derivative maintains itself; but it is by the mere power of inertia; if there were a positive conservative force involved, if its maintenance were essential or important, it would not be let go. As things are, it is of great consequence to the practical usefulness of language as an instrument of communication and of thought that the oblivion in question do take place, that our signs for ideas be not encumbered with etymological reminiscences. And the changes of form and of meaning, under the government solely of convenience, do go on unchecked, and independent of one another: there is no limit to the extent to which a word may change its form while retaining its old meaning, or its meaning while retaining its old form; or to which it may wander from its primitive condition, both inner and outer.

We do not find, then, in the traceable history of language, any more than in its present condition, evidence that the names of things exist *φύσει*. No such principle is called for in order to explain the facts; none such seems even admissible, as reconcilable with the facts. It now only remains to inquire whether there was or must have been something different at the outset, in the actually primitive period, that of the origin of language. Each existing conventional usage or habit founds itself upon a predecessor of the same character, as far back as we can go: was the absolutely lowest course of the foundation of another character? are we to recognize

there a real internal correspondence of sound to sense? If there be any such thing in language, it is to be found only there.

But, as hardly needs to be pointed out, if this last be true, there is a strong presumption against its being found there, any more than elsewhere. What we can discover no traces of in all the later periods of speech, we may well despair of detecting in the earliest. To assume it out of hand, as the manner of some is, without even deigning to attempt its proof, but simply setting down as superficial or mechanical those who hold any other view, is certainly in the highest degree unreasonable. On the contrary, it may properly enough be claimed that if any sufficient and satisfactory way can be made out, of accounting for the origin of speech without bringing in as a factor any natural correspondence of sound to sense, but by appealing only to those forces which are seen in action in the later periods, and in their recognized and usual modes of action—then that account of origin will have the whole body of probabilities overwhelmingly in its favor.

And certainly, such an explanation lies close at hand, and is easy enough to find. We need only to recognize the impulse to communication as the force most immediately active in the production of speech, to acknowledge that man spoke primarily in order to make his feeling or thought known to his fellows, and all difficulty is removed. It will then follow that whatever would most readily conduce to mutual intelligence would be made the first foundation of expression: whether a reproduction of the natural tones and cries expressive of emotion, or an imitation of the sounds of nature, living or lifeless, or any other kind of imitation; whether, again, by tones addressed to the ear, or by gestures or grimaces addressed to the eye—for the theory would fully combine and turn to account all the known varieties of expression, leaving that one which experience should show the most available for its purposes to win the preference over the rest, and finally, perhaps, to well-nigh crowd them out of use. The beginnings thus made would certainly be of a rude character—even as sticks and stones for instruments, as

fig-leaves and skins for garments, as caves and holes in the ground for dwellings, as scratches with sharp points and daubs of colored earth for pictorial art, as yells and groans for musical art: and so on. To adopt the theory of origin here proposed is equivalent to paralleling speech with these other human acquisitions and branches of culture, as being an instrumentality, gradually wrought out by the exercise of the peculiar powers with which man is endowed, and answering purposes which are human only; as brought into its present state of perfection, greatly different in different races, by slow accumulation, improvement, evolution, according to the various gifts and circumstances of each race. This view of language doubtless appears to some to be lacking in dignity; but if it is supported by all the facts and inferences of language-history, a sentimental prejudice can avail nothing against its reception.

And that it is so supported appears to me true beyond all reasonable question. If there is any other acceptable theory, I know not who has set it forth and given it a solid foundation. Those who reject it have wholly failed to realize that the burden of proof rests upon them, to show, or make probable, that there is, or ever was, a power of natural expression in men whereby certain combinations of articulate sounds are produced as the instinctive signs of certain articulate conceptions. I cannot see that they have produced any good evidence that there exists such a thing as the natural uttered sign of a conception. As has been pointed out above, the natural utterances of man do not signify conceptions; they intimate only feelings, emotions. If a human being feels a certain kind of lively pleasure, he laughs; if the contrary, he cries, or groans, or sighs, or something of the sort; if he is struck with astonishment or horror at the sight of anything, he may utter an exclamation; but it will only signify his feeling in view of it, not the thing itself. So much as this is instinctive, subjective; but it is not of the nature of human language; it is on the same plane with the ordinary utterances of the lower animals. There is no conversion of it into language until that motive is added which is the dominant and almost the

only conscious one through the whole after-history of language: namely, the intent to communicate. This, by a change which is almost imperceptibly slight at first, while yet of deep and wide-reaching importance, lifts the whole action up to a higher plane. It inaugurates an instrumentality which, though cut loose from any internal connection with the operations of the mind, yet makes itself their ally and aid, and is, precisely on account of its extraneousness and its conventionality, capable of indefinite increase, development, refinement. It is like the production of instruments, in place of a sprouting out of new arms and legs, to answer to the higher needs of the more skilled workman. It comes to bear a wonderful part in the development of the individual mind, and in the cultural progress of the race.

There is nothing really derogatory to the creative power and self-centred action of the human soul in making it thus dependent for its development upon what seems a slight and extraneous motive: nothing, at any rate, more than in making man's development in all other respects dependent upon his position as a social being. It is confessed that the wholly solitary man would never be anything but an utterly wild savage; in the collision, the emulation, the mutual helpfulness, that come of sociality, are born all the arts of life. The greatness of man consists in what he was capable of becoming, not in what he actually was at the outset. In his low estate he was accessible to only the lower motives. He is, at the best, a short-sighted being, capable of taking but one step forward at a time, and never quite knowing where that will lead him; but also capable of maintaining the ground he has won, finding out what it is worth to him, and in due time taking another step. All his grand acquisitions have had their small beginnings and their slow growth, each generation adding to what it had received from its predecessor; and language just as much and just as plainly as the rest.

The doctrine of those who deliberately answer *φύσει* to our question I cannot help regarding as mainly a prejudice, and resting on a foundation of misapprehension. Because, in the history of development of human expression, the voice has

come to be the greatly-prevailing, the well-nigh exclusive, instrument of expression, therefore they hastily conclude that there is a special natural relation between the mental apparatus of conception and judgment and the physical apparatus of sound-making—a relation which, as we have seen, is wholly imaginary. They talk learnedly about the reflex-motor action of the nerves, and assume that, when an impression comes over one, it causes him to utter or imagine a responsive sound, somewhat as a sense of the ludicrous calls forth a laugh, a sensation of fear, a crawling feeling, a dash of cold water, a shiver, and the like. They overlook certain essential differences between the two cases: in the first place, that these reflex-motor actions are the intimation of subjective conditions only, which conditions confessedly give rise also to utterances—but these utterances are not language, are not even its beginnings, but only its suggestion and preparation; and, in the second place, that the actions referred to are actually seen and demonstrated in living men, of every race, that they are substantially the same in all, that they may be controlled, but not altogether obliterated, much less interchanged and varied, under purely social influences, without regard to race; while the variety of expression of ideas is unlimited, and its choice dependent on nothing but education. To support the *φύσει* doctrine by quoting sporadic efforts at independent expression on the part of children growing up in the midst of speaking men is quite futile. Children are imitative beings, and sometimes a little wayward; they catch soon from their surroundings the trick of applying names to things, and, being aware of no particular reason for those they are taught, they try now and then a new one of their own making, enjoying the exercise of a degree of independent ingenuity. Nothing more than this is needed, I believe, to explain away all the scanty array of alleged facts which have ever been brought up in defense of the theory of natural expressiveness. To give that theory a real basis, it would be necessary to show that a child growing up alone, or among mutes, would also produce a body of articulate utterances, of definite meaning and application: or (what has been noted above as a much more accessible proof) that the deaf do the same thing.

Eminent knowledge in psychology, in physiology, in phonetics, in any of the single departments which contribute their part, or their aid, to the science of language, does not by any means lead necessarily to correct views in linguistic philosophy. One may, for example, be the greatest living phonetist, and yet be still puzzling himself with the question what is, after all, the real tie of connection between sound and sense in language. One may be a profound metaphysician, and yet wholly mistake the same connection, taking with regard to the most essential points in the history of language an untenable, even absurd, position. It would not be difficult to cite individual examples of both these classes.

Our conclusion then is, that there is no proper sense in which the names of things can be said to exist *φύσει*; not only now, and through the ages of recorded speech, but even back to its very beginning, every name has been the result of a *θέσις*, an act of human attribution.

And yet, there is at least a certain sense in which the *θέσις* itself may be said to be performed *φύσει*; and it is in great part owing to a misapprehension of this sense that the answer *φύσει* has been so often given to the main question. It is undoubtedly, in a manner, “natural” to man to speak. We have to say “a certain sense,” “in a manner,” because the naturalness does not consist in man’s individual nature alone, but also in his circumstances; with all his gifts just as they are, he would not speak unless placed in the company of his fellows. It is in just the same sense “natural” to man to live in houses, to wear clothes, to make instruments, to form societies, to establish customs and laws; yet hardly any one would think on that account of maintaining that, for example, coats and telescopes existed *φύσει*: while it is nevertheless quite as true of them as of nouns and verbs.

He who answers *φύσει*, therefore, to the question we have been discussing, lays himself open to the charge of total misapprehension of the most fundamental facts of language-history; he who answers *θέσει* needs only to show by due explanation that he does not mean to imply that any individual can successfully fasten any name he pleases upon any idea he

may choose to select ; since every change must win the assent of a community before it is language, and the community will ratify no arbitrary and unmotivated changes or fabrications. It is in this action of the community that another great part (besides that spoken of above) of the difficulty resides for those who hesitate to admit the doctrine of *θέσις*: they see so clearly that no man can do what he will with language that they are led to deny the action of individuals on language altogether. To do this is to mistake the nature of the conservative force which resists change: in reality, this force all resolves itself into the action of individuals, working under the same guidance and limitation, of motives and of circumstances, by which each of us is directed, and of which each one may, if he set himself rightly at work, become fully conscious.